

Freshening Duxbury's Air Are We on a March to Extinction?

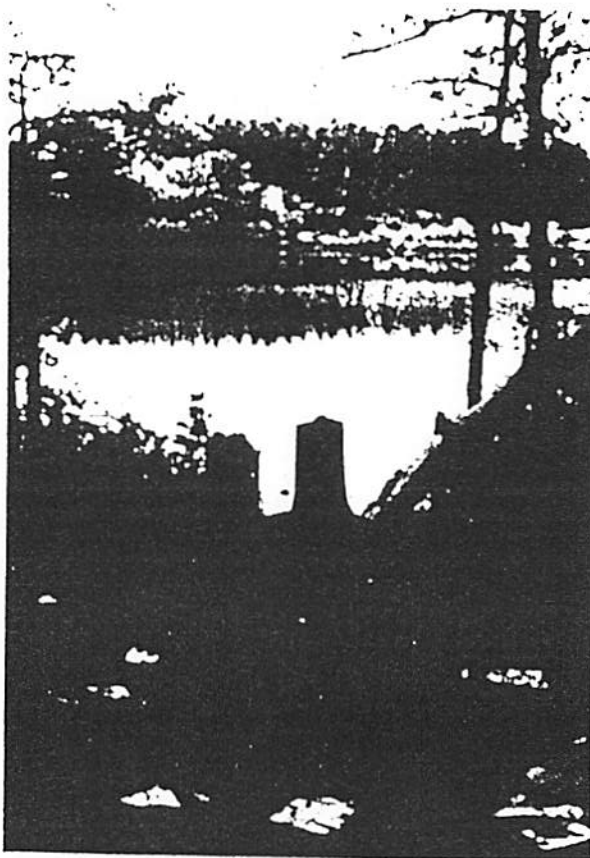
By REV. CANON ROBERT MERRY

Three things strike me simultaneously as I pass the sign, "Entering Duxbury," driving back from Boston on a hot afternoon. First — the sign itself, which produces sentimental feelings. My heart lifts up when I pass it. Then the Myles Standish monument appears on the left, 3 or 4 miles away on the crest of Captain's Hill. Third, a cooler breeze than I've felt all day in stuffy, dusty, Boston hits my cheek. And this cool breeze is the subject of this essay. Maybe it is the work of the imagination of a native son of Duxbury, who was absent from town for 40 years, now returned in retirement. I don't think so as it was always the claim of my father as well, an absolute lover of Duxbury.

Whether these 3 sensations strike anyone else coming home after a hot day in the office in Boston or not — it is fact that this town is a very special place. The Duxbury Rural and Historical Society has done a great deal to help preserve Duxbury ever since the society began in 1883. Hundreds of individuals have lent their support to clean beaches, sweep streams and reserves over the 1,000 acres of woodland and open space, as part of their town pride and civic action. It is the diligence of these people that has preserved a particular quality to the life in Duxbury. We are not only its inheritors, but it is incumbent on us that we assume our obligation, as they did before us, to pass it on to generations to come.

The town of Barnstable on the Cape recently spent \$2,000,000 to secure an open space area. We spent \$3,000,000 ourselves to acquire Waiting Hill and thus secure aquifer protection and preserve our water supply. This essay is an effort to alert ourselves that these open spaces and woodlands are not only vital to our water supply, but enable us to have at hand ample fresh air for our breathing. Just last week a developer, who cut down a few trees to make room for a condominium, received several phone calls from neighbors in protest. "Greenpeace" asks that we plant more trees, for such plantings are an antidote to acid rain that is poisoning our ponds and staining our streams. Clearly it is a time of unusual environmental awareness. This effort I am making seeks to intensify the urgency of our situation and suggests one way we can help.

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Careless picnickers left debris at Round Pond.

I wrote in an earlier article that clean woodlands were a must for our aquifer protection. Duxbury's drinking water is second to none in the Commonwealth, but its purity can only be preserved if seepage from waste can be eliminated. Using our woods as rubbish heaps can contaminate our aquifers. The Commonwealth has already banned the dumping of all petroleum products that end in "ine" (i.e. gasoline, benzene, etc.) on the ground anywhere. Such dumping will gradually reach wells and springs and aquifers. Constant vigilance must be maintained to keep drinking water safe. A similar urgency is present in the matter of air. In a word — beautiful pines, hemlocks, oaks and maples are not luxuries, but an essential ingredient in our life.

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lend a hand. Perhaps the yellow litter bags used on state highways can be used and litter carried to the nearest highway. These are a few of the thoughts that have been expressed. Possibly cardboard signs posted around town, a story in the *Clipper*, or some mention on Channel 28 would be in order. Much work will have to go into the project, but it is my belief that an informed public will see this as another opportunity to freshen the air and purify the drinking water of



Duxbury woods are not a dump.

our town. There is so much to be done, and the town and state and county are suffering such financial reverses that it is only we who can take this bull by the horns and make this town environment safe and healthful. This matter is so urgent that it was the first item on the tasks assigned to the nations meeting for the summit in Paris a week ago. Perhaps we can also achieve a world community when we all realize we face the distinct possibility of marching to extinction unless we grasp this issue with both hands.

Third Thursday Series Continues Tradition

By JUDITH MONTMINY

On Sept. 21, Bob Hale continued the tradition of his lively book and author series at the First Parish Church. The series gives Duxbury audiences a chance to hear about the behind-the-scenes politics of the publishing world and meet authors who describe the

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The first action of the new Duxbury Rural Society was to provide street lamps for the main streets of the town (hence the society's logo) - but the second program was setting out 200 shade trees in the playgrounds of the schools to provide shade for games during recess. At this time Duxbury was completely barren of trees in the village area. I remember Ford's pasture across from North Hill where my father summered - his heifers had only a few short shrubs and Ford's Store was plainly visible a hundred yards down the hill on Tremont St.

If they were planting trees today, they would be concerned not about shade in playgrounds, but replenishing oxygen in the air. They would be angry about acid rain that has decimated our forests and poisoned our ponds. As Greenpeace says, "If a million people planted one shade tree each, it would totally counteract acid rain effects." Greenpeace has extended its concerns beyond seals, whales and dolphins and is focusing on toxic wastes. The Audubon Society likewise is expanding to monitor the entire environment. Their new motto: "We're not just for the birds anymore."

We Duxburyites must realize that we cannot have clean air all by ourselves. Auto emissions and factory precipitations are bombarding us every hour of every day. Our alertness to this menace is essential to our health. It was reported on TV recently that 4,000,000 tons of toxic waste gases are pumped into our air legally every year.

I am writing these lines as our nation is celebrating the 20th anniversary of the moon landing on July 20, 1969. People who thought the moon excursion was a lot of bravado and a total waste of money and great risk to human lives are now proved wrong. This moon trip was the trigger that alerted our people to the fragility of our planet. I can testify that my interest in the environment really began when I saw that beautiful picture of the earth floating in space. It was so tender, so small and really insignificant, as seemingly were the people on it. But it is all we have and unless there is a massive outpouring of care and concern for it in all its dimensions, it will be rendered unfit for living creatures.

It has been said the human race stands at the crossroads, with the threat of instant annihilation by nuclear destruction or the slow extinction of life by the poisoning of its sources. The June 1989 issue of *National Geographic* has an article on the birth, life and extinction of dinosaurs and other creatures. It is entitled, "The March to Extinction," with implications that the human race is on a similar march.

It was the sight of that lovely blue and brown globe floating in space that has awakened many to the precariousness of life on this fragile planet. So many things done in the past - exploiting lands and emptying seas of fish, eliminating creatures living in the wild - are no longer appropriate. War and interracial conflicts of all sorts are also no longer acceptable. We are in a whole new ball game since that moon walk.

Beauty is present in the matter of air. In a world - beautiful pines, hemlocks, oaks and maples are not luxuries, but an essential ingredient in our life.

My son Michael, a meteorologist with special attention to air and water pollution, has helped me understand the problem. He reports that clean healthful air is in short supply across the land. I have been sobered by his report, which is repeated in daily newspapers, that the air in most of our industrialized cities is unfit for humans to breathe on hot, hazy and humid days. Normally the sun acts to heat the air which then rises, bringing in fresh air from the surrounding countryside. But hydrocarbon emissions from cars, also from industrial gaseous wastes, form an impenetrable blanket of poisonous gas. The sun's action is blocked and death-dealing smog remains. These are the days when the daily newspapers warn older folks and children to stay indoors. Trees are a great source of life-giving air. They work to turn deadly carbon monoxide into oxygen.

My son also informs me that in early morning traffic jams with still air, people inhale tons of the hydrocarbon emissions from the cars. The lack of wind simply allows the fumes to pile up and provide lethal quantities of pollution to those who are unfortunate enough to be there. One wonders what damage is being done to the thousands of commuters' lungs on a still morning on the Southeast Expressway.

Every day there are reports of toxic waste disposal site discoveries dating from a day when we all thought that if we buried something, that was the end of it. The urgent task of cleansing our air is upon us. It looks like an insuperable task, but there is one practical way right here in our beloved town we can resist cursing the darkness and light a candle.

This is by cleaning up our woods, inviting landowners of open space to restrict its use, and inviting a massive volunteer effort to police all our town land holdings. Such a clean up is envisioned by the Duxbury Rural and Historical Society and its lands committee chairman David Stookey. Last Columbus Day weekend, Betsy and Fred Stevens on behalf of the society held a fall foliage fiesta in the Round Pond and Town Forest off Mayflower St. About 75 people turned out to walk the trails. David Clapp of Audubon and Joe Grady, environmental officer, had laid out the trails. Earlier these 2 experienced woodsmen advised that the big issue in land preservation (and by implication fresh air) was surveillance. The society has had in place for over a year now a dozen or so couples who take turns patrolling the woodlands. It is the hope that something of this kind will be organized so that we can bring to all the town and privately owned and leased lands, the same care and concern members of the Duxbury Rural and Historical Society has brought to their own holdings.

One suggestion has been made that we constitute our fall foliage festival as a kickoff for the cleaning up of the more than 1,000 acres of woodlands. Further, we could slice up the assessor's maps of these lands and parcel them out to committed volunteers. Police, fire, water and highway departments would

On Sept. 21, Bob Hale continued the tradition of his lively book and author series at the First Parish Church. The series gives Duxbury audiences a chance to hear about the behind-the-scenes politics of the publishing world and meet authors who describe the steps that led up to the publication of their new books.

The first program this year focused on women as central characters.

Kathryn Lasky Knight, a favorite of Duxbury readers, spoke about her new "adult" novel, *The Widow of Oz*, (she is an established author of children's literature under the name Kathryn Lasky). She also made references to her tale of her cross-Atlantic sail, *Atlantic Circle*. Hale called that book "a classic."

It's a wacky, off-beat story about marriage and sailing on a 30-foot sailboat bound for England, Knight said. Although she considered *Atlantic Circle* and her children's books "serious," Knight said she felt compelled to write a novel for adults so critics would think of her as a "serious author."

Hale described *The Wizard of Oz* as "a very perceptive novel." The heroine, Dorothy Silver, gives up her house in Lincoln to move to a Back Bay condominium with her husband, only to have him die suddenly. "Dorothy reminded me of Penelope in *The Shell Seekers*," Hale said.

"I started with the notion for a character basically because I wanted this book to celebrate grey haired, 50-year-old women in some way," Knight said.

Barbara Cohen and Louise Taylor wrote their book, *Dogs and Their Women*, not because they wanted to be taken seriously by critics, but because they wanted to show the bonds of emotion and interdependence that exist between women and their canines.

Hale described the photos in the book as "understated" and "very friendly." The work on the book started 4 years ago, even before the authors had a publisher. After distributing flyers asking for anecdotes and pictures of dogs, they received over 800 responses from women across the country. Every day they would receive 10-15 letters with personal stories in them.

Women would write from their heart, Taylor said.

After 13 publishers rejected the idea for the book, Cohen fired their agent and called on publishers herself. "I always wanted Little Brown because it's local," she said. The editor she spoke to was a dog lover and told her how to improve the book. After the changes were made, the authors were given a new list. We were told we had good "raw material," Cohen said.

"We needed to find the right home for the book," she said. When Cohen and Taylor visited the editor, she went to her desk to show them a heart-shaped framed picture of her dog. The authors knew they had found the right match for their book, Cohen said.